



## Who Needs Building Codes?

We all do—whether in our homes, offices, schools, stores, factories or places of entertainment. We rely on the safety of structures that surround us in our everyday living. The public need for protection from disaster due to fire, structural collapse and general deterioration underscores the need for modern codes and their administration. Resilient construction has the potential to substantially reduce property damage and loss of life resulting from all forms of natural disasters.

### HOW RELIABLE ARE THEY?

Most aspects of building construction—electrical wiring, heating, sanitary facilities—represent a potential hazard to building occupants and users. Building codes provide safeguards. Although no code can eliminate all risks, building codes set minimum safeguards.

### WHAT IS A BUILDING CODE?

Practically, it is the government’s official statement on building safety. Technically, it is a compendium of minimum safety standards arranged in a systematic manner (codified) for easy reference. It embraces all aspects of building construction—fire, structural, plumbing, electrical and mechanical.

### WHAT IF I WANT TO DO A BUILDING PROJECT MYSELF?

Building departments have pamphlets and brochures explaining, in detail, how to obtain permits and design and construct a safe building. Inquire within your local community.

### WHY SHOULD CODES APPLY TO MY OWN HOUSE?

For several reasons:

- For your personal safety, and that of your family, and the guests invited into your home.
- To ensure the economic well-being of the community by reducing potential spread of fire and disease.
- For the conservation of energy.
- To protect future home purchasers who deserve reasonable assurance that the home they buy will be safe.

## Support Building Safety!

For more information about building safety codes and local requirements, contact your local building department.



## Building Codes

How They Help You



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# BUILDING CODES— HOW THEY HELP YOU

*The regulation of building construction is not a recent phenomenon. It can be traced through recorded history for more than 4,000 years. Through time, people have become increasingly aware of ways to avoid the catastrophic consequences of building-construction failures.*



## History of Building Codes

The earliest known code of law—the Code of Hammurabi, king of the Babylonian Empire, written circa 2200 B.C.—assessed severe penalties, including death, if a building was not constructed safely. Regulation of building construction in the United States dates back to the 1700s. In the late 1800s, major cities began to adopt and enforce building codes in response to large fires in densely populated urban areas.

The primary intent of early building codes was to reduce fire risk, but over time, their scope has broadened. Today, building codes are sets of regulations that address structural integrity, fire resistance, safe exits, lighting, ventilation, flood protection and construction materials. They specify the minimum requirements to safeguard the health, safety and general welfare of building occupants.

For codes to be effective, an understanding and cooperative relationship must exist between officials and the groups they serve—homeowners, developers, urban planners, designers and others in the construction industry. Codes must

therefore be responsive to the government's need to protect the public. They must provide due process for all affected and keep pace with rapidly changing technology. All of these groups work together to develop and maintain codes.

During the early 1900s, model building codes were authored by the code enforcement officials of various communities with key assistance from all segments of the building industry. Now, model codes are the central regulatory basis for the administration of programs in cities, countries and states throughout the United States. They represent a collective undertaking, which shares the cost of code development and maintenance while ensuring uniformity of regulations for the optimization of technological advancements. The International Codes (I-Codes), developed by the International Code Council, are a family of fifteen coordinated, modern building safety codes used in all 50 U.S. states and in many other countries.

For further information, contact your local building department.